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RESULTS OF BRITISH NAVAL CONCENTRATION.

BY ARCHIBALD S. HURD.

THE full political significance of the reorganization of the British Navy, which has lately been completed, has not been realized. The map of the world is very infrequently studied by persons outside the Naval Intelligence Department in the great capitals for the purpose of seeing how naval power is distributed over the seas. Ships of war are continually being ordered from one station to another; and, if there were no newspapers to record the movements in international politics, any intelligent student of affairs, with an atlas before him, could form a fairly accurate impression of the trend of friendships and jealousies from the manner in which the respective naval Powers group their naval forces on the various great ocean highways. If the British redistribution scheme is examined by this method, it will be found that it supplies very gratifying evidence of the continued growth of cordial relations between the British Government and Japan, France, Italy and, notably, the United States of America.

Prior to the decision to reorganize the British sea-going forces, the Admiralty was maintaining an enormous preponderance of ships of war in the Mediterranean, was keeping two large groups of cruisers patrolling the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the American continent, and had in full commission in China waters no fewer than five battle-ships, eight cruisers and a similar number of sloops and gunboats, in addition to torpedo craft. At the same time, a small squadron of cruising vessels was stationed on the West Coast of Africa, a larger squadron was based upon Simonstown, Cape Colony, and there was a considerable array of strength in Australian waters, on the one hand, and in the East-Indian seas—not excluding the Persian Gulf—on the other.

This wide distribution of naval power had been inherited, with practically little change, from the time of the Napoleonic wars and of the troubles between Great Britain and the United States, while in the Far East the accumulation of naval war material had been due to the action of Russia. When at last it occurred to some one, and if the truth must be told that some one was Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher, to take an atlas and find out what justification existed for such a distribution of power, it was found that the time was overdue for a very considerable rearrangement.

The majority of the officers and men of the Fleet were engaged in cruising in vessels of slight fighting value in waters which were far removed from probable scenes of conflict. Great Britain was on the most cordial terms with all the Powers in the Mediterranean, and yet she still persisted in parading the Midland Sea with a fleet of huge proportions, including over a dozen battle-ships. In the Western Atlantic, nearly a dozen cruisers were continually under the orders of the Admiral in command of the historic North-American and West-Indian station, whose duty consisted in making peaceful but purposeless cruises, luxuriating in the invigorating climate to be enjoyed in Canadian waters in the summer months, and hibernating under genial and pleasant weather conditions in the West Indies during the colder months of the year. Then, on the other side of the American continent, yet another Admiral was busy making the best of life as it is led on the Pacific coast. Why, it was asked, is it necessary for Great Britain to keep a dozen battle-ships in the Mediterranean, where month after month is devoted to the pleasant interchange of friendly courtesies between Powers more or less completely bound together in the determination to preserve the *status quo* in this region of the world? What foe, it was also asked, are all the cruisers wandering about the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America prepared to meet and defeat? In these waters it was realized that the only possible enemy was the United States. Had it not been an axiom in the political relations of the countries, it was further inquired, that war between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race was a hideous spectre which had been laid because it outraged the feelings of both countries? Moreover, if these friendly relations did not, as a matter of fact, exist between Great Britain and the United

States, of what use, it was suggested, would the two squadrons of the Atlantic and Pacific, consisting entirely of vessels without armor belts, be against the massed squadrons of battle-ships flying the Stars and Stripes.

Again, when it came to an examination of the reasons which had led to the assignment of a large naval force to Far Eastern waters, it was immediately recognized that the whole naval position had been completely altered in consequence of the alliance formed by Great Britain with Japan. On the other hand, in consequence mainly of the progress of the German Fleet, the naval position of Great Britain in the English Channel and the North Sea was becoming year by year increasingly threatened. Owing to the large number of officers and men required for manning the battle-ships and cruisers in extra-European waters, where no trouble threatened, a large portion of the armored ships of the Empire, and almost all the torpedo craft, lay in the dock-yards without officers and without men. It had long been the custom to calculate, in a rough-and-ready way, the naval strength of Great Britain by the number of ships which she possessed, rather than by the number she could put to sea in an emergency, fully stored and with crews adequately trained in their war duties. At this date, every naval harbor in the United Kingdom was crowded with men-of-war, some so old as to have far exceeded the span of useful existence, and others so comparatively modern as to deserve a better fate than to lie month in and month out without an officer or seaman on board. With a naval personnel exceeding 131,000, the resources of the Admiralty were unequal to the task of even providing the best ships in reserve with reduced crews, and of the horde of torpedo craft only about a score were maintained in a condition of preparedness for action. Year by year, great additions had been made to the number of torpedo craft, and only a small section of this most important division of the Fleet was kept at anything approaching a condition of war readiness.

Success in naval war depends upon a delicate combination in peace time of human intelligence and skill with the best available war material. Ships in reserve which are hurried to sea in charge of strange deck officers and men, and of engineers and stokers who are unfamiliar with their mechanical equipment, must become merely horrible shambles when brought face to face

with the foe adequately trained for war. The total expenditure on the Fleet at this time was approximately £40,000,000, and owing to the crowded state of all the Royal Dockyards demands had already been formulated for extensive naval works, in order to provide additional docks and fresh space for anchorage adequately defended by fixed defences. Then there was an inexorable need for newer and more efficient men-of-war; and, in consequence of the demands for officers and men for the large number of weak men-of-war patrolling the waters of friendly States, a further large augmentation of the personnel was inevitable. It appeared as though, in the then existing course of naval routine, Navy Estimates amounting to about £60,000,000 annually would be presented to Parliament at an early date, imposing upon the taxpayers of England an unparalleled burden. The situation was one calculated to arouse the gravest anxiety, particularly in view of the energetic measures adopted by Germany with a view to creating a great Fleet efficiently organized for war, and within three or four hundred miles of the eastern and least defended coasts of Great Britain.

In these circumstances, the scheme of British naval reform was considered and finally adopted. A little calculation showed that the officers and men who were required for placing the reserves of ships in a satisfactory condition were already in existence, locked up in the non-fighting ships spread out over extra-European waters which in the existing political situation could not become the scene of naval conflict. On the other hand, it was readily ascertained that the vast assembly of obsolete and obsolescent men-of-war which had congregated at the naval ports not only did not represent any reserve of strength, but, owing to complications which their existence introduced into the naval organization, were a distinct hindrance to any progress towards a more efficient marshalling of the British naval resources. In the then existing condition of the Fleet, ships at home and men abroad were deteriorating for want of reasonable and coordinated organization for war. Fighting-ships were moored in lifeless lines in the naval harbors, while the officers and men required to man them cruised up and down the coasts of friends and allies, carrying out a purposeless routine, not merely uncondusive to war fitness, but distinctly tending towards naval decadence. The secret of war efficiency lies in concentration. Then and then only

is a spirit of emulation excited. Only then is emulation in war-like drills aroused between ship and ship in the first degree, and between group and group of ships in the second degree. Under the scheme of distribution which dissipated the naval strength of Great Britain over all the world's seas, irrespective of the political circumstances of the hour, ships were cruising in an isolation far from splendid in its influence upon officers and men. British naval expenditure had reached a standard representing the maximum outlay for the minimum result.

Consequently, when it was finally decided to withdraw the naval squadrons in the North and South Atlantic and the squadron on the Pacific coast of America, and to recall and put on the scrap-heap a number of non-fighting ships which were sauntering up and down the coasts in other parts of the world, and at the same time to clear out the naval lumber which crowded the home ports, at one and the same time a policy of naval economy and war efficiency was initiated. It was instantly discovered that the plans for additional docks and anchorage could be torn up. The proposals for adding to the Navy a large additional number of officers and men could be abandoned. The estimates which had been prepared for repairs upon ships which could never do efficient service in war could be struck out. Several small dock-yards in distant peaceful waters, which had hitherto been maintained on a war footing, could be reduced to cadres, and simultaneously a naval organization could be introduced representing a higher standard of war efficiency with a far lower standard of expense.

It is very much cheaper to maintain a ship near a home port than in foreign waters, and in no country is this advantage so great as in Great Britain, where the cost of living and the outlay upon coal, victuals and stores of all kinds is specially low. A vessel which is stationed within steaming distance of a British port is provided with coal, stores and victuals at first cost, and a very low first cost; whereas a man-of-war which is stationed in foreign waters has to be debited with the very heavy expenditure due to the outlay upon transport, while, in the case of perishable goods, contracts have frequently to be made in expensive markets. Another advantage attaching to withdrawal of ships from distant waters is that the pay of officers and men, instead of going into the pockets of foreign tradesmen and others, is spent among

those who actually pay the taxes by which the Fleet is supported. The elimination of so many old ships in the home ports, ships which were tinkered from year to year and thus accounted for a considerable amount of labor, led to a large reduction in the number of dockyard hands. But this policy of economy was offset by the increased spending power of the Fleet in home waters, and thus experience has shown that never in time of peace have the British naval ports been in a condition of such abounding prosperity as now. The labor displaced found employment in other channels.

The scheme of redistribution of British naval strength involved some loss, more sentimental than actual. The North-American and North-Pacific Squadrons were withdrawn, and thus the naval supremacy of the United States was left absolutely uncontested, in recognition of the good faith of the American people, and as a tangible admission of Great Britain's hearty concurrence in the Monroe Doctrine. The United States has taken upon herself the *onus* of maintaining the *status quo* on the American continent; and, by withdrawing her naval squadrons, Great Britain tacitly affirmed her acceptance of this great central principle of American national policy. As a naval Power, the United States is bound by every incident in the history of the Republic to maintain her position as the supreme naval Power on the American coasts. The only vessels of the British Fleet in what may be regarded as American waters now comprise one little sloop on the Pacific coast, merely to show the flag, and three small cruisers based upon the West Indies, to carry out police duties and keep the natives in order. It is well, in the interests of the friendship of the two peoples, that the public should realize the significance of this change of naval policy.

In the Far East, an even more significant moral may be drawn from the reduction in the China Squadron. Time was when the British Fleet in Chinese and Japanese waters was as supreme as the British naval forces in the English Channel. The Royal ships in China waters acted as the protectors of white traders of whatever nationality, and was busy, month in and month out, in putting down piracy, not only on the high seas, but up the rivers of the Celestial Empire. As the grasp of Russia upon China increased during the nineties and the early years of the present century, so Great Britain, with a firm determination to

maintain her position, repeatedly strengthened the local squadron. The growth of the Navy of Japan vitally affected the situation; and, when the Government at Tokio indicated its resolve to preserve, if need be by force of arms, the integrity of China and the nominal independence of Korea, and thus secure the future of the Japanese Empire itself, Great Britain willingly struck a bargain and agreed to keep the ring, while Japan freed China and Korea and herself from the alien domination which was slowly being imposed upon these countries. Until the struggle was over, the China Squadron of Great Britain was maintained at full strength, but as soon as the last remnant of Russian naval power had been broken in the Sea of Japan, the British battle-ships were ordered to return to Europe, and the squadron was reduced to a strength of four armored cruisers, two protected cruisers, and a number of small craft for river work, together with half a dozen destroyers. From a fighting fleet it was transformed into a fleet primarily intended to carry out police duties in view of the importance of British commercial undertakings in the Far East, and in the last resort to cooperate with the Japanese Navy in defence of common interests. By this action, the British Government virtually gave its adherence to a Japanese political principle in the Far East equivalent to the Monroe Doctrine of the United States.

Force of circumstances has compelled the British authorities to admit that British naval power can no longer be world-wide, as in the days when Great Britain held absolute supremacy in commerce. Competition in naval armaments in local waters, with the United States on the one hand and with Japan on the other, was admitted to be not only hopeless, but unnecessary, and even dangerous to the mutual interests of these countries. It was argued that both these Powers had given their cordial adherence to the principles of political and commercial liberty in support of which British naval forces in the Far West and in the Far East had been employed. The Republic of the Far West and the monarchy of the Far East had risen to a sense of their responsibilities in their own immediately adjacent waters, and in perfect reliance on the good faith of the two nations Great Britain handed over to them naval sway in the Atlantic and South Pacific. To-day there are two Monroe Doctrines; in the Far West the United States stands guardian, and in the Far East

Japan, for her own preservation, and, as events will show shortly, with the consent of all the Powers of the world, is taking upon herself a similar responsibility.

The new scheme of British naval distribution has been criticised. It has been suggested that the British flag is not shown in sufficient strength in extra-European waters; but the real fact is that the British flag, as a commercial asset of admitted value, has never stood higher than to-day. It is true that a number of small, slow, non-fighting vessels are no longer creeping up distant coasts with the Union Jack at the main, sauntering into this port and into that. But, on the other hand, the withdrawal of these small and unimportant craft has furnished the British authorities with officers and men to man squadrons of large, powerful and imposing cruisers, which are frequently engaged in ceremonial voyages to distant parts of the world. Never before in the history of the British Fleet has the Union Jack been seen more frequently or supported with more dignity than during the past two years, when Prince Louis of Battenberg, Sir Alfred Paget and Rear-Admiral George Neville have successfully paid visits to Canadian, United States and South-American ports, apart from the frequent presence of Rear-Admiral F. S. Inglefield's squadron of large cruisers which spend the autumn and spring months in the temperate climate of the West Indies, with contingents of boys completing their training for naval service.

The effect of these changes upon the efficiency of the British naval organization for war has been remarkable. It was immediately possible to fit out another sea-going fleet, manned and armed for any eventuality, and gradually yet another fleet has been called into existence with attendant cruisers and auxiliaries, and all the torpedo craft of the British service have been manned in exact proportion to the haste with which they will be required on a sudden outbreak of war. In 1904, there were only sixteen battle-ships in British waters, together with eight armored cruisers, six protected cruisers, twenty-four destroyers and a few torpedo-boats. All the remainder of the ships of the British Fleet, nominally in reserve, lay idle in the dockyards and harbors, unmanned and with hardly a semblance of organization for war. The British naval machine has now been tuned up to a higher standard of war efficiency. The task is not yet complete, but the fruits of the bold scheme initiated by the Admiralty less than

three years ago are already apparent in the imposing naval forces organized in the English Channel, the North Sea and the Mediterranean. Ten armored ships—six battle-ships and four armored cruisers—together with four small cruisers and twelve destroyers, keep watch and ward in the Mediterranean; and, apart from the routine of naval training, they are occupied chiefly in further cementing the friendly relations which exist between Great Britain and the Mediterranean Powers. Fully manned, constantly cruising, and being maintained month in and month out at war strength, Great Britain has now massed in home waters three great fighting fleets, the Channel, Atlantic and Home Fleets. The innovation in this organization is the Home Fleet under Vice-Admiral F. C. B. Bridgeman and five Rear-Admirals, which is divided into three divisions, one based on the Medway, at the mouth of the River Thames and therefore overlooking the North Sea; another on Portsmouth, the most easterly British war port in the English Channel, and another on Devonport, which is further west. In the existing political situation, and particularly in view of the *entente cordiale* with France, the burden of naval responsibility has shifted from the English Channel to the North Sea; and, consequently, the head and front of the Home Fleet is stationed at the Nore. It consists of six battle-ships, including the "Dreadnought," and six armored cruisers forming the Fifth Cruiser Squadron. It is intended that eventually this latter force shall consist of swift ships of the new battle-ship-cruiser type, with an advantage of six knots in speed over the swiftest German battle-ship, and a considerable superiority of gun-fire at modern ranges. Half the battle-ships of the German Fleet carry nothing better or more powerful than an obsolescent 9.4-inch gun; while the main armament of the British battle-ships at the Nore is the serviceable 12-inch gun, and eventually each of the cruisers will carry six 9.2-inch guns of a new and particularly powerful type. Associated with this force at the Nore are five small cruisers and a large number of auxiliary ships, besides forty-eight of the most recent torpedo-boat destroyers and a flotilla of submarines.

If this were a complete picture of the advantage gained by the scheme of redistribution, it would more than compensate for the disadvantages upon which some criticism has been centred. As a matter of fact, however, these fully manned battle-ships, cruis-

ers and torpedo craft based upon the Nore and continually cruising in the North Sea, are merely the ever-ready section of the new Home Fleet formed as a result of the scheme of naval reorganization. Behind this imposing naval force are the Portsmouth and Devonport divisions. These two other sections of the Home Fleet consist of ships which, under the old régime, would have been in the dockyards and harbors without officers or men. Now they are part and parcel of the fighting Fleet. Each vessel has its captain, chief executive officer, torpedo, gunnery and navigating lieutenants, and all the essential skilled ratings upon which the fighting efficiency depends. Each vessel has approximately three-fifths of its full complement, and the remaining two-fifths are available at short notice without calling out a single man of the reserves. These ships can be brought from a nucleus state up to war strength and sent to sea at a few hours' notice. In the case of the torpedo craft at these two ports, the delay would not amount to more than four hours, as has been shown by experimental mobilization.

Under the old scheme, the British Fleet could not be mobilized without a Royal proclamation calling out all the reserve forces. During strained relations, such procedure would have inevitably tended to precipitate war. Under the new scheme, the whole of the Home Fleet can be despatched to sea fully manned, victualled and stored, without recourse to any such dramatic and dangerous machinery. Periodically, the Devonport and Portsmouth divisions with their nucleus crews proceed to sea for a week or ten days, during which they carry out the ordinary drills and, in particular, attention is devoted to gunnery. This is a remarkable development from the state of affairs when the reserve ships lay deserted and inert. These two divisions comprise seven battle-ships and over twenty-five cruisers, besides upwards of sixty torpedo-boat destroyers, thirty-six torpedo-boats and the reserve section of the submarines which have been recently added to the British Fleet. Yet another section of the Fleet comprises what are termed "special-service vessels." These are obsolescent ships, which have merely care and maintenance parties on board to keep them in condition to be brought forward for service in an emergency; they are England's forlorn hope. This plan of reorganization has been carried out without denuding harbor ships of their crews or interfering with the

classes under training at the various instructional establishments, such as those devoted to gunnery, torpedo, signalling and navigation, the last-named being an innovation. Moreover, it has been accompanied by a notable increase in the general efficiency of the naval personnel, due, no doubt, in large measure to the spirit of emulation which is always engendered when large masses of ships are collected for the purpose of naval training.

The net outcome of the scheme of naval distribution, apart from its political aspects, to which attention has already been called, is that the striking-power of the British Fleet has been at least doubled. In the opinion of the late Prime Minister, Mr. A. J. Balfour, this is a very moderate estimate of the accession of strength due to the provision of nucleus crews. Great Britain now has in full commission in the English Channel, the North Sea and the Mediterranean thirty-two battle-ships, eighteen armored cruisers, fifteen protected cruisers and sixty torpedo-boat destroyers, apart from the nucleus crew ships. This total includes the Nore Division of the Home Fleet, the naval forces massed under the orders of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford and forming the Channel Fleet and First Cruiser Squadron, the Atlantic Fleet and Second Cruiser Squadron, under Vice-Admiral the Hon. Sir A. G. Curzon-Howe, based upon Berehaven and Gibraltar, and the Mediterranean Fleet with the Third Cruiser Squadron under Admiral Sir Charles Drury. Each of the two last-named officers has at his command ten armored ships, six in each case being modern battle-ships.

This naval organization is the direct result of the scheme of redistribution; and it has been effected with an economy in the Navy Estimates amounting to six millions sterling a year. Great Britain is the only naval Power which has reduced its naval commitments in recent years, and the saving has been accompanied by an immense increase in strength in the adjacent seas, which are the fulcrum of European political development.

ARCHIBALD S. HURD.